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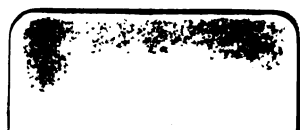
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GWENDOLINE
AND
WINFRED.



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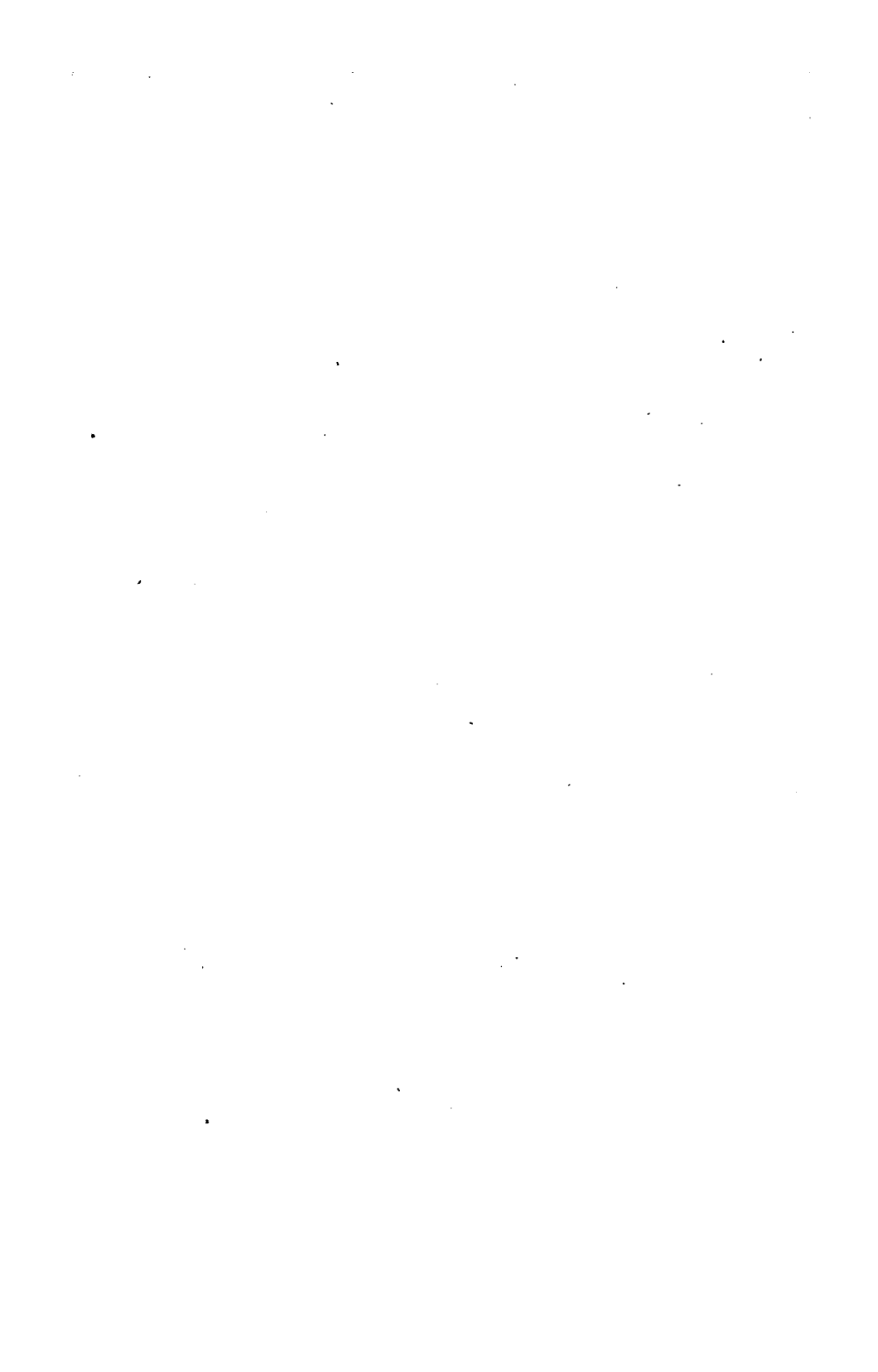




GWENDOLINE

AND

WINFRED.



G W E N D O L I N E

AND

W I N F R E D .

—◆— *Perkins*



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GWENDOLINE AND WINFRED.

PART I.

By a moss bank of softest green,
Where violets shed their odours sweet,
And purling brooklets run between
The groves of laurel at your feet,
From the chill winter's icy hand
Loos'd to enliven all the land,
Which 'neath the Spring sun shone as bright
As tho' unknown the Frost King's might,
Two maidens, lovely as a dream,
Sat gazing on the warm sunshine—
Bright Winfred, with her eyes' rich gleam,
And laughter-loving Gwendoline;
On whose young brow of purest snow

Joy doth her sunny radiance throw;
Enliv'ning with its sparkling grace
The tender beauty of her face.

Surely some fairy hand hath deck'd
The younger maiden's head,
On which all glorious gifts unfleck'd
Have lavishly been spread.
With lofty brow and eye of fire,
Kindling to light with that intense
Deep radiance which, or love, or ire,
Rouses to strange magnificence.
Her lips with rich vermillion dyed,
Striving their scornful curl to hide,
And clust'ring locks of dark nut-brown
That queenly brow to deck and crown.
Such was proud Winfred! Gwendoline
In gentler beauty did outshine
The younger sister's orient prime;
Admir'd and lov'd, but fear'd by none.

Not so the other: in whose face,
Without a moment's thought, you'd trace
 Strong passion's current running on.
Yet beautiful both were to sight—
Two magic forms of love and light,
 'Twere hard to choose between!
Some like a scornful lip and eye,
That flashes like the light'ning by—
 Give me the calm, serene,
The gentle look and tender word,
Soft as a lute's sweet chords when stirr'd
By some light finger o'er it thrown;
Waking a rich, melodious tone,
And soothing ev'ry heart that heard.

Now Gwendoline and Winfred were
 Two sisters kind and true;
From parent stem no lovelier pair
 Of rosebuds ever grew,
In pure twin beauty, side by side,

The neighb'ring garden's love and pride.
Rear'd by a mother's fostering hand,
Which gently did their leaves expand
 To Life's fresh morning air;
Little they knew of anything
 But what was bright and fair.
Stern Sorrow with her blighting wing
 Swept not their paths until
That Mother, slowly withering,
 Pass'd from this world of ill,
In calm sweet beauty, like a ray
Of sunshine at departing day.
Then o'er proud Winfred's head the storm
 Of passion wildly rolled,
And over that beloved form,
 In Death's grasp stiff and cold,
With streaming eyes and rigid mood
 Of agony she bent ;
Whilst Gwendoline beside her stood,
- Like pitying angel sent—

Her cup of sorrow, tho' as full,
In resignation beautiful!

Vainly from day to day she strove,
With words of meek enduring love,
To soothe her sister's pain,
And win her from her wild despair
To breathe again the morning air,
And turn from sorrow vain.

What reck'd the dead of those hot tears,
E'en if they trickled forth for years?

But, no! the torrent must have sway;
As easy 'twere her grief to hide
As for weak man to stem the tide
Of lava flowing on its way
From the hot depths of Etna's mountain,
Thrown up in showers as from a fountain.

At length Time's hand work'd out the cure,
And o'er the darken'd sky

The rays of sunshine, slow but sure,
 Stole imperceptibly !
And the grey dawn shut out the night
From Winfred's re-awak'ning sight.
Tears had wash'd all the past,
 And joy return'd once more ;
Green grew the grass at last
 O'er graves mould-sprinkled o'er,
And the mem'ry of the loved one gone
 Wax'd in her spirit dim,
Whilst bright-eyed Happiness once more
 Chanted her matin hymn !

The strongest feelings work below,
 Shut out from vulgar sight ;
And deep grief may lie hidden, tho'
 O'erwhelming in its might.
Thus gentle Gwendoline, whose face
Reveal'd not suffering's outer trace,
 Felt Death's pangs shoot within.
And tho' all passionless she went

Upon her onward way, intent
For Winfred calm to win,
Yet felt she Earth could bring no more
The happy hours she'd known before.

Her mother's dying words remain'd
Upon her heart, like colours stain'd
On glass—a holy radiance shone
In each engraven parting tone.
And her last wish that she should be
To Winfred all that she had been,
Bearing her tempers silently,
As to provoke were deadliest sin,
Seem'd like a harp-note, low, yet clear,
For ever sounding in her ear.

When I began my tale two years
Had slowly pass'd away;
And both young hearts had dried their tears
And joy resum'd her sway,
Since that dear Mother's form was laid

At rest beneath the cedar shade.
Winfred had been the worshipp'd star
Of all the country, near and far,
Who knelt at Beauty's shrine.
They saw no faults, or would not see,
For beauty, bright Divinity,
Makes all appear divine:
As yet no strong temptation came
To rouse proud Winfred's heart of flame.

She lov'd and was belov'd again
By one of high estate;
No low-born youth might ever claim
Her hand at ball or fête
A scornful look she turn'd on those
Who from low birth by merit rose.
Yet one presum'd to gaze
Upon her beauty as she came,
And sun him in its glowing rays,
Though noble not by name.

Young Desmond, poet-heart, with eye
Whose lofty glance might pierce the sky
And track its hidden deep:
Rifling the mysteries that lie
In Heav'n's unveil'd sublimity,
Lock'd in his heart to keep,
'Till with a master touch the lyre
Should breathe them forth in tones of fire.

Around his brow, all crown'd with bays—
The wreath of poet fame—
Did Genius shed his deathless rays
To consecrate his name.
High hopes that soar'd on golden wing
Seem'd day by day as fresh to spring
With him as flowerets sweet,
That blossom gaily at your feet
When Summer with her od'rous wing
Sweeps o'er the earth, and scatters there
Her wealth of ev'rything that's fair.



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— *James M. Smith*

— *Journal of the American Medical Association*

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Alas ! high heart and noble brow
From Winfred ne'er might gain
One little thought, or send a glow
Of rapture through her brain.
In heedless sunshine on she roved,
Admired, flatter'd, and beloved.

Whereas on Gwendoline's sweet face,
That shone with ev'ry Christian grace,
A thoughtful hue o'erspread,
That shadow'd Joy's bright roses,
Making them lovelier far to sight;
As when a tiny cloud reposes
One moment on the brilliant light
By sun at mid-day shed :
Check'ring the earth with shade awhile,
Then bursting forth with brighter smile.
With pensive eye she watch'd each cloud
That over Desmond lower'd,
Dark'ning his sky as with a shroud,
His onward path embower'd

With wildest hopes, that she could see
Were doom'd to wither silently.
What gift of hers would she not give
To win him peace, and bid them live?

But no! far other was his doom:

With secret love to trace
Day after day the cherish'd face,
And feel within his heart night's gloom
Forever creeping nearer;
Yet hope 'gainst hope that Time might bring
Some bright change on its healing wing,
Some spell to make him dearer.
Strange, Desmond, that those poet eyes,
That gather from the earth and skies
Such lofty inspirations,
Can fathom not the human heart,
Nor read its aspirations.
Beauty beguiles, till Cupid's dart
Transfixes the beholder's eye
And casts a film upon his sight

That turns the morning into night ;
 Whilst stern reality
In empty visions melts away,
And Truth's obscur'd by Passion's ray !

But to my tale : blithe sang each bird
 A free rejoicing strain,
As tho' their hearts, with rapture stirr'd,
 Must breathe it back again.
And the little brooklets' waters rolled
On with a melody untold
To that blue main on whose vast shore
They'd lose themselves for evermore :
Like Life from Death's tempestuous sea
Fresh launching in eternity !
Light play'd on all the scene around,
 Light on each maiden's brow,
Their laughter mingling with each sound
 That fell in cadence low.
And, oh ! how beautiful they were,
As garden lilies fresh and fair !

Gaily they talk'd of those sweet hopes

That o'er youth's skies will play—

Bright as a flow'r when first it opes

Its glad eye to the day,

But all unconscious, heedless thing,

That eve would find it withering.

Of sunny moments yet to come

O'er each young happy heart,

Of Love that made his cherish'd home

Too faithful to depart:

And all the world seem'd then to them

Bright as the opal's glowing gem!

Alas! that visions of our youth

Should ever fade away,

Or 'neath the wholesome light of Truth

Grow paler in their ray.

Oh, that the fields, the woods, the streams,

Shone now as in our earliest dreams!

With what delight we then would cull

Wild flowers, and call them beautiful;

Monarchs to follow in its wake,
And lowly bend for her dear sake !

With what a bright triumphant eye,
And glowing cheek of rosiest dye,
She to her sister told

The promises Lord Arran made,
Which, day by day to her convey'd,
In truth were manifold;
And how rich gifts he sent beside
That might beseem a Prince's bride !

Poor Gwendoline, she laughing said,
As with a wild toss of her head
She shook her clustering locks of brown
In a rich golden shower adown
The snowy neck that peep'd from out
A ribbon circling it about—
Dear Gwendoline, thy fate will be
A lowlier one than mine I see,

Altho' thy gentle witchery,
Thy kindly heart and look so mild,
And graceful bearing like a child,
Might win a noble partner yet—
If thou would'st only seek to mate
With lofty name, and all forget
Those dreams ideal which cruel Fate
Hath wak'd within that little head;
Surely a coronet, o'erspread
With jewels rich and rare,
Is meeter far for thee to wear
Than that plain braid of golden hair.
I would not lose one dream of mine
For that calm happiness of thine.
Yes, sister, thou art smiling now,
But wait till years have dimm'd thy brow—
Then see if in thy lowlier lot
Trouble and care will enter not ;
Whilst I secure shall dwell afar
Enthron'd, as in the skies a star !

Lord Arran told me yesterday,
When angrily, tho' half in play,
 I curl'd my lip and frown'd,
That never troubadour had sung
In courtly halls, while plaudits rung
 And minstrels' brows were crown'd,
Beauty so queenly or divine
As thrills throughout this form of mine.
 Yes, smile again,
 I am not vain—
Or if I am, it is no crime.
It almost makes me cross to see
Those eyes look down so strange on me.
"Nay, Winfred, say not so,
Time, only Time will show
If rank and riches can bestow
That peace of mind, without which we
Must drag on life in misery.
Dost love Lord Arran, child?
With love all undefil'd—

Such as will last thro' wrong and tears,
Unwither'd by the lapse of years?
If not, go give thine hand
Unto the burning brand,
But swear not by God's Altar Throne
To love and honour gold alone!"
So spoke sweet Gwendoline,
As with a thrilling look
The sister's hand she took;
Her eyes' deep magic shine
Seeming with light divine
To kindle, as each solemn word
The breathless air around them stirr'd!

A moment's silence, whilst each song
Burst forth in gladder strain
The groves of chestnut trees among,
Which echoed them again;
And the waterfall's low music fell
With magic irresistible;

Whilst onward flow'd the little stream,
Rejoicing in each sunny beam,
Calm on its rippling breast, and light
Upon its waters cool and bright.
Then spoke proud Winfred, in a tone
From which all bitterness was gone,
Trembling, uncertain in its chime,—
“ Sister, I've chosen out the path
Through good or ill that shall be mine ;
If it some rays of sunshine hath,
Trust me, I never shall repine.
No dreaming fancies fill my breast,
Of cottage homes and sabbath rest.
And well Lord Arran knows the bride
He's chosen, and her heart of pride:
Still, I believe he loves.
Mine is an eagle soul, that soars
From all a tamer one adores,
It mates not with the dove's,
Which 'neath the humblest roof content,

Loves on in mournful banishment !”

She ceas'd, and flash'd her eye of fire,

And curl'd her lip, as if in ire.

Then rising, said, “ We'll go

Back to the home thou lovest so ;

And, dearest Gwendoline, refrain

From touching on this theme again ;

It wearies both my heart and brain,

And makes my blood run slow.”

She took her sister's hand, and prest

It kindly in her own ;

Back came the sunshine to her breast,

The gladness to her tone.

And the cloud upon her brow dispersed,

And left it radiant, as at first ;

Then on they mov'd, in converse gay,

As tho' no storm had swept that way.

Strange that two leaves from off one tree

So different should grow ;

That sister forms who at one knee
At ev'ning's hour knelt low,
Breathing the self-same pray'rs above—
Sharing one mother's fondest love—
Should grow apace, and grow apart,
With no sweet union of the heart.

But so it was with them,
Rear'd from the same green stem;
Not even in face, in form, or tone,
Was any trace of kindred shown!

Ungenial ev'ry thought.
On Gwendoline's fair pensive face
The master mind usurp'd its place;
And gentleness unwrought,
With pure deep feeling, gave her eyes
The holy calm of summer skies.

But Winfred's was a heart of flame,
From childhood it had been the same,
Spurning at all control;

The gentlest word awoke her ire,
The slightest breath fann'd anger's fire
 Within her stormy soul.
Yet well she lov'd, tho' rash and wild,
Her mother and her sister mild:
And from the day, when 'neath the mould
They laid that mother stiff and cold,
She'd sought to be to Gwendoline
All that a sister should have been.
And so they liv'd, as kindred true
In love and faith should ever do,
Though not the less unlike in hue.

To stranger's eye for ever seem'd
Winfred the brightest far —
For, like some glowing star,
From out a heav'n by poet dream'd,
Her rays shot down on ev'ry one,
Whilst Gwendoline's more faintly shone.
And those who knew her better,

And saw her soul unfetter,
Were still so dazzled by her light,
They ne'er could read her failings right.

And thus was Desmond taken :
Caught in a web of glowing hue,
That ev'ry moment clearer grew,
Though by all hope forsaken,
Madly he worshipp'd at a shrine
His poet soul had made divine.

And Winfred liked his homage too—
The vain unthinking ever do :
Tho' with a scornful look
She'd see him bending o'er a book
In which she knew her likeness traced ;
Tears with their heavy rain
Might wash it out again,
But in his mind, all uneffaced
'Twould dwell for years, and be to him
A haunting mem'ry pale and grim !

* * * * *

Time sped, and came the bridal day,
With all its pageant and array.

The birds were singing,

The chimes outringing

With their sweet merry roundelay,

When Arran took his bride away.

And the sun shone down with summer heat,

And flowers were scatter'd at their feet,

And Winfred's heart triumphant beat!

Oh, what of Gwendoline?

Upon that dazzling scene

She calmly gaz'd, then rais'd her eye,

Imploring blessings from on high

Upon that sister's way

With whom she never more might stray.

It seem'd as tho' a link was broken

From deep affection's chain,

The farewell word that last was spoken

Came echoing back again,

'Till her eyes all dimm'd with tears look'd out

Upon the bright sunny world without.

She felt Lord Arran ne'er would be

What Winfred hop'd to find;

For tho' he loved her tenderly,

His was no gentle mind.

And she knew her sister would not try

To do her duty patiently,

But with her proud imperious will

Seek to reign on despotic still.

And then poor Desmond—what a blow

To his kind heart that loved her so!

How should she soothe his pain?

With such sad thoughts slow pass'd the time

Till daylight gently did decline,

And ev'ning came again;

And star by star came forth to peep

On earth, from heav'n's wide trackless deep.

Surely the stars are spirits; from their home

Calmly they gaze on ours that lies beneath,

Too tinged with hues of suff'ring, pain, and death,

For pure angelic footsteps e'er to roam.

Sometimes they seem to mock us with their glow,
As we gaze upwards in our tearful woe:
Too cold and still for these poor hearts of ours,
That wake to April smiles as well as show'rs.
So thought the lone one, as to spheres on high
In musing mood she lifted up her eye,
In which the dew-drops glisten'd,
And felt herself alone—
Alone with God who listen'd:
Then woke an undertone
That thrill'd thro' all around
With a glad thankful sound,
'Till her bow'd soul felt calmness creep within,
And knew to murmur or repine was sin.

Long seem'd the weary days at first,
As she wander'd all alone,
In seas of solitude immers'd,
Missing the lively tone
'That fell in laughter rich and clear
So often on her list'ning ear.

But gradually there stole
A calm contented feeling,
Its peaceful light revealing
Within her lonely soul;
And the past like a bright dream shone o'er
The misty future dim and hoar!

She had one friend—a gentle maid,
With graceful fragile form,
On whom Time's finger lightly laid
Both sunshine sweet and storm.
Like pallid Lily of the Vale,
Bending before each blighting gale,
But when it pass'd lifting her head
Blooming as ever from earth's bed,
And with a calm rejoicing eye
Looking all thanks to God on high.

Her father was the pastor, who
Was lov'd by rich and poor;

His kindly words, like morning dew,

 Their harvest did ensure.

And the old man walk'd upon the road

His teaching had to others show'd—

 Walk'd in primeval love:

No cloud upon God's face he saw,

All mercy in each written law,

 All comfort from above.

And his faithful teachings, meek and mild,

Won back full many an erring child.

With open hand he gave to all

 Who sought his kindly roof,

Obedient to his Saviour's call,

 And few e'er kept aloof;

For the poor and friendless ever were,

Full well they knew, most welcome there;

For the suff'ring and the sad

 He had words of comfort kind,

For the joyful and the glad,

 From the sources of his mind,

He had many a bright and harmless jest,
It was hard to know which loved him best.

Ethel, his gentle daughter, clung
To him, like ivy wreaths entwined
About the sere and sapless rind
Of an old oak: she fondly hung
Upon each look and smile of his, and sought
To shape her actions to his ev'ry thought.
From childhood's hours she'd been his joy and pride,
And now the daughter to the old man's side
Grew close and closer, as she could not bear
To lose one smile, or, dearer still, one pray'r.
'Twas a sweet sight to see them move along
The village green at summer's eventide,
Bearing their gifts the cottage homes among,
Whilst blessings greeted them from far and wide,
To hear his solemn voice on days of pray'r
Invoking benedictions from above,
As with a look of deep and earnest love
He bent his gaze on the assembled there

Within that little church where he
For years fulfilled his ministry,
Warning from vice and scenes of sin unblest
Some who had stray'd, and comforting the rest.

On Sabbath eve, with Gwendoline
And Ethel by his side,
Often this good man might be seen,
With looks of love and pride,
Strolling in the green fields that lay
Around that village neat and gay:
And the peasant maidens as they walk'd,
And blithely to their lovers talked,
Would watch them on their way,
With looks of love that might be seen
In ev'ry reverential mien,
And a kind " God bless them " say.

Those were calm hours of happiness,
By earthly care unstain'd,
That left sweet memories to bless
As long as life remain'd.

And dear to Gwendoline each thought
The pastor to her young mind brought ;
And dearer still his voice
Which bade her heart rejoice,
As of that better world he talk'd
That lay above them as they walk'd.

There are some tones with pow'r to thrill
And make each pulse vibrate,
And so had his—tho' low and still
They shook each fortress gate;
And the sleeping conscience caged within
Woke with a sudden start,
As with words of truth they sounded in
The caverns of the heart !
Winfred had felt their pow'r
In many a bye-gone hour,
When he warn'd her not to live
For this world's fading bliss,
But her young heart to give
To a brighter home than this—

To a Father who in mercy smiled
On every sin-repentant child.
And tho' she turn'd her back upon
 His precepts wise and good,
She felt the force of truth that shone
 In language she withstood ;
And she knew how wilfully she chose
 The wrong path from the right,
Though now no time for wavering,
 The morn of life so bright !

Unto the Pastor's dwelling
 Full oft did Desmond wend ;
His heart with sorrow swelling
 Much needed such a friend.
Altho' he spoke not of his grief,
 They knew its heavy weight,
And did their best to soothe with love,
 His sorrow-stricken state.
At first with cold averted eye
 He met fair Gwendoline,

But soon he read her sympathy,

So easy to be seen.

And her earnest air, and kindly look,

Her candour and her sense,

And gentle words, ere many days

Won all his confidence.

And then they talk'd together

Of Winfred and the past,

Of hopes that faded fast,

When Doubt's chill wintry weather

Woke Disappointment's blast.

Of days that were to come,

And of the distant home

Which held the form each lov'd the best.

I cannot tell you all the rest,

For they became great friends—each heart

Expanding like a flower

Which feels the genial power

Of summer's warmth in ev'ry part,

And gently opens out to woo
The breeze its leaves to wander thro' !
And neither were of common mould;
Both had high hopes and dreams—
Those mysteries of thought untold
That with celestial gleams
Shoot from the starry orbs on high,
Swift as a comet through the sky.
Both gazed with love intense
On Nature's wild magnificence;
And worshipp'd God in all,
Through darkness as thro' light,
His glory fill'd their sight,
And answer'ing to His call
In youth they gave Him up their heart,
And dwelt from this vain world apart !

* * * * *

'Midst scenes of gaiety which threw
Their colours round of gorgeous hue,

Short seem'd each day to Winfred now,
And bright each passing hour;
Contentment sat upon her brow,
And in her bosom's bow'r.
And with bright smiles she still repaid
Each sacrifice Lord Arran made.
Amongst each courtly throng
She mov'd in light along
In majesty and state,
And adulators bent
Beside her as she went,
Admired by poor and great;
And honied tones breath'd in her ear,
With flatt'ry's accents low yet clear!

Hardly a day
Pass'd on its way,
But at some princely fête
She reign'd as beauty's queen;
With sparkling eye and heart elate,
Who lovelier could be seen?

And with the world's vain homage crown'd
She look'd triumphantly around !
Lord Arran often frown'd,
But his frown pass'd quickly when her eye
Flashed upon his its witchery;
And when her sweet voice thrill'd
 With laughter on his ear,
 His lip forgot to sneer,
And his bitterness was still'd.
And it seem'd as tho' her happiness,
Altho' he shared it not, must bless !

And yet at times throughout his frame
A vague uncertain feeling came,
 And an angry impulse strove
For the mastery in his breast—
A feeling that he'd ne'er possess
 Her pure, deep, faithful love;
For, if she had, why should she be
So fond of others' flattery?
He hated those she lov'd the best, . . . E

Each self-invited guest that prest
Around her daily, and that grew
Into her friendship and her grace;
And then was weary of the place,
Saying he long'd for something new.
But Winfred ev'ry wish withstood,
Whether express'd in gentlest mood
Or tones less courteous, and her will
At present was the conqueror still.

Alas! alas! she little knew,
In this life's summer hour,
How cold, unreal, and untrue,
How changeful in its ev'ry hue,
How worthless in its dow'r,
Was all she held most fair to view:
And what she sacrificed to gain
The homage of the light and vain!
Oh! had she only been more wise,
And look'd into her husband's eyes,
And read the thoughts that hover'd there,

Perchance, with one kind word, she might

Have won the sunshine back again,

And driv'n away the clouds of night

That gather'd slowly in his brain,

And chas'd his brooding spirit's care.

But, no! she fell into the snare:

As he grew cold, she sought to be

More cold and careless still than he!

At first he let her have her way:

Week after week, day after day,

In gaiety flow'd on.

With weary heart and heavy eye

He saw the dull hours wander by,

Till summer's pride was gone—

And the autumn tints crept slowly,

With hues demure and holy,

The terrac'd walks upon:

And the loud wave lash'd the shore as tho'

It fretted in some hopeless woe.

Then he grew sullen and morose,

And folded in his spirit close

Ev'ry imagin'd wrong.

He saw her smile and saw her jest,

By the base flatt'ring crowd carest,

And join the dance and song ;

And felt that he had now no part

In the affections of her heart !

And then each word

Of praise he heard

Stirr'd up a jealous fire,

And but awoke his ire.

Till at last the truth flash'd clear and plain

Through haughty Winfred's dazzled brain.

Would she had sought,

With tender thought

To chase his anger far ;

But, alas ! she did not seek

With gentle words and meek,

To hush the tempest's war.

But with scornful lip and flashing eye,
And a burst of temper fierce and high,
That would not brook control,

She utter'd angry words that broke
Upon the silence of his soul,
And bitt'rest indignation woke!

He answered not, but from that day
It seem'd as all love died away;
And like a form of stone,
In which life never shone,
Cold, sculptor-like, without the play

Of one warm feeling to adorn
Its graceful majesty, he stood,
And with a firm unflinching mood,

Impervious both to sun and storm,
Look'd down on her, and watch'd her path,
In silence and in boding wrath.

Little she car'd, or little knew,

So dazzled by the gay world's hue,
Of what he thought or felt;
Enough for her that princes bow'd,
And words of homage, false tho' loud,
Across her spirit steal!
Like butterfly thro' sun and show'r
She sported on her little hour.
The tempest came at last!
Hoarse blew the raging blast;
And the surging waves of anger swept
With a fearful might around,
And deafened with their sound,
Till wearied with their force they slept,
And an awful silence reign'd instead.
Solemn and cold, as of the dead!

A little while, and then was broke,
The drear and gloomy spell;
And thus, in accents terrible
Of scorn, Lord Arrán calmly spoke,

While gloomy clouds o'erswept his brow :

“ Winfred, there was a time when I

Both loved and trusted thee; but now

That happy time has long passed by.

I know thee for as light and vain

As any following in thy train;

For giddiness, and want of sense,

And pride and haughty ignorance,

Thou canst no equal claim.

But still thou bear'st my name,

And bearing that can bring it shame :

I, therefore, in my wise self-love,

Deem it is fitting to remove

To a far distant spot, where I,

At least, may wander quietly—

Where thou, forgetting and forgot,

May'st learn contentment with thy lot

And it may be, win back once more,

The love so truly thine of yore !

To-morrow at the break of day

All will be ready—so, to-night
At Prince Alonzo's festal bright,
Thou canst each farewell say!
Nay, no reproaches: they are vain,
For Arran is himself again;
And Arran's will must be to thee
What thine to him was formerly!"
He ceas'd, and turn'd away—
Like the fierce light'ning's ray,

His anger wither'd where it fell,
And haughty Winfred felt its power,
As it scorch'd her spirit in that hour,
With its breath so terrible!
She stood all pale and ghostly there—
A voiceless statue of despair.

Was it for this she'd left the home
Of happy hours gone by?
For this Lord Arran's bride become,
'Midst state and pageantry!

Alas! alas! o'er her young head
Reality its terrors spread,
Bright visions died away;
And her haughty soul, subdued and still,
Brooded in silence o'er each ill,
To dull remorse a prey!

In mournful whisperings return'd
Words that in vain were said;
Advice she wilfully had spurn'd,
In happy hours now fled.
And she could have wept, but would not,
O'er her dead hopes and alter'd lot!
However dark,
And drear and stark,
Her future path might be—
The worst she'd dare,
And proudly bear
Her load of misery.
So thought she, as with scornful smile,

She drove dull care away awhile;
The worldling ne'er should know
What crushing weight of woe
Beneath sweet outward smiles conceal'd,
Its sting within her heart reveal'd.

That eve she seem'd more gay and light
Than on each former festal night,
None could with her compare;
For a strange deep radiance fill'd her eyes,
Like the rich tints on sunset skies,
With a beauty still yet rare.
And her laughter thrill'd thro' every breast,
Which but little dream'd of that soul's unrest.
Once only fell a shade
Across that lofty brow,
One moment there it staid,
Yet methinks I see it now!
For it seem'd as some tempest struggled thro'
The outward calm that met the view!

'Twas a cloud that was seen by all,
And its fearful hues o'erspread,
With a ghastly col'ring, like the dead
May wear 'neath their shadowy pall.
But it pass'd like a dream from her face away,
And left it unscathed by its lightning play!
Some fancied she was ill,
And begg'd her to rest awhile;
But she answer'd with a smile
So pleasant and so still,
And join'd in the mazy dance once more,
With a lighter step than she did before.

As she listen'd to tones that had now grown dear,
For the last, last time on earth;
She could hardly repress the starting tear,
For her outward garb of mirth
Was as forced and hollow as well could be,
And her spirit writhed in its misery.
Yet she did not strive in vain

To impress the crowd: she was happy and free
As ever the best beloved one can be,
And did still despotic reign
O'er the lordly heart that she hated now,
Since forc'd to his mandate her will to bow!

A fearful thing is life,
With its wild scenes of strife,
Its maskings and its woe—
A troubled one at best,
When dreams of love and rest
Around their sunshine throw.
But when the heart with pain convuls'd
Has neither prop nor stay,
Oh, who may paint its agony,
Or chase its blight away?
Alas! alas! for the gay dreams
That cheer us in our youth,
When childhood's happy sunshine streams,
And all seems joy and truth;

When the heart is as fresh and pure
As the first breath of spring,
And knoweth not life's summer heat,
(Or autumn's withering !

Poor Winfred ! soon the tempest came
To cloud those brilliant eyes,
And in thy soul its light'ning flame
Consuming, scorching, lies !
Never again, across Life's Heaven
Joy's meteor lights will play,
All rainbow hues for ever riven
With love and hope away.
Oh ! that Lord Arran's wrathful mood
By thee were better understood ;
That his stern eyes had read aright—
His words more gentle been,
Than on that sad and fatal night,
When anger's breath blew keen,
And when his with'ring scorn gave life

Within thy soul to hate and strife.
Little we know or little think,
Poor giddy beings on the brink
Of sin's dread precipice
Of misery and vice,
How soon into its gulf we sink.
Else were our steps more cautious, and
Our eyes fixed ever on that land
Which, like a beauteous dream, shines far
Beyond Earth's clouds—as some bright star
Seen only when the heav'ns are clear,
And not in murky atmosphere?
Alas! that our poor erring sight
Can pierce not thro' the clouds of night,
Nor see the bright Eternal!
How little worth is aught below
Compar'd to what that world can show,
Rich in delights supernal.
Fading is all—love, hope, and joy
The rust of earthliness destroy,

But Faith lives on for ever ;
And doubt can darken never
That heart in which its holy light
Burns constant on, serenely bright.

PART II.



THE beacon lights from many a tower
Blazed far and wide and near,
Thro' the wild tempest glaring out,
And noisy sounds of cheer,
And drum, and fife, and cannon's boom
Broke through the night of storm and gloom,
And fill'd the region round about,
Till long past midnight's hour.
Glenivor Castle had not seen
For many a year before,
Such wassail and uproar;
Nor had its tenants been
With such glad hearts to welcome back
Their young lord on his homeward track,
Their young lord and his bride—
As through those halls so wide

She pass'd with him, a shudder spread
Unwittingly from foot to head,

And her heart grew faint and chill;
But the people bless'd her as she went,
And the air with acclamations rent,
Louder and louder still!

"Hail, Lord of Arran, bold and free,
Gladly we welcome thine and thee!

Hail, Countess, young and fair!
Rich blessings on those brilliant eyes,
That queenly step, and noble guise,
That beauty rich and rare!

Glenivor Castle now will be
The scene of mirth and revelry,
Too proud that Arran's step once more
Falls in its halls as erst of yore,
And that he brings so fair a bride
To grace the banquet by his side!"
Then louder rose the glad hurrah,
Responded to from near and far!

With courteous mien Lord Arran then

Unto his tenants kindly spoke,
Whilst not one sound the silence broke:
"My gallant friends and countrymen,
 I thank you from my heart,
Yes, thank you more than words can say,
For the welcome given me this day
 In public and apart;
And I trust my lovely Bride may prove
Worthy your homage and your love.
Give us an hour for rest, and then
We'll at the banquet meet again!"
He bow'd responsive to each cheer
Then vanish'd thro' a portal near.

With more of kindness in his air
Than for the few last weeks was there,
 He led poor Winfred to her room,
And bade her welcome to the place
Her beauty had been born to grace,
 Without one look of gloom.

Stately and proud each corridor,
Ceilings all carv'd and gilded o'er,
And polish'd ev'ry oaken floor ;
But the room, as she saw it then, seemed fit
For a queen to hold her court in it.
Such wondrous walls, such mirrors vast,
Reflecting you where'er you pass'd ;
Carpets in which your foot sunk down,
As in a bed of Edredon ;
Sofas all broider'd o'er in gold,
With quaint devices manifold ;
And portraits that gaz'd down with laughing eyes
As tho' mocking at Winfred's calm surprise.

Despite herself, she was all delight
At the splendid things that met her sight,
And smiled when Lord Arran said,
That an hour hence at the festal board
She must sit in state beside her lord,
At a right regal spread ;

For that the country had come to pay
Their grateful homage to them that day,
And that from far and wide,
From cottage homes and halls of pride,
Peasants and nobles thronged,
Anxious to welcome with kindly word
Back to his own Glenivor's lord,
Who ne'er had his good name wrong'd,
But who was respected and loved by all
That gathered that night at his tenants' call.

“ Now braid thy hair with gold and pearl,
As suits the consort of an earl,
And wear thy brightest smile ;
And see thy tone is not too proud,
No trifling, and no laughter loud,
But a queenly look the while ;
For be it not said that Arran's bride
Could be match'd for beauty the whole world wide
Neither for sense nor grace—
For poor is a lovely face,

If the soul within doth not wear its hue,
To wisdom and virtue staunch and true."

She answer'd him low, with a scornful look,
Which showed that his words she ill could brook,
 " Lord Arran need have no fear,
For Winfred, who erst in his lordly eyes
Was for beauty and sense a noble prize,
Tho' no longer consider'd so now,
 Is the same as she was in her lowlier sphere,
When no coronet graced her brow,
And she feels that her presence will honour the board
As well as the guests of Glenivor's lord !"
So saying, she turned away,
Whilst her eye with its haughty ray,
Burned coldly bright, and the colour came
To her marble cheek, like a sudden flame.
He staid not to listen the words she said,
 But pass'd thro' the open door,
And echo gave back his footsteps' tread,
 As they sounded on the floor ;

And the mournful gusts of the wind did sweep
Round each ancient tower and ivied keep.

A moment she watched with a sadden'd eye
The flickering lamp's pale flame,
And a host of painful mem'ries came
Like a flash of lightning by;
But her heart was strong and she bade it wake
From the idle dreams which she thence did shake
That night at least

She'd be blithe and gay,
And light the feast
With her beauty's ray—
All should acknowledge she was a bride
Peerless and radiant, Glenivore's pride!

She gaz'd in the mirror—its clear cold face
Reflected her image there,
And the flowing locks which with clust'ring grace
Encircled that brow so fair!

There was no form could more perfect be
Than her's, in its faultless symmetry;
 Yet gazing on she sigh'd,
For her maiden dreams were all unfulfill'd,
And dread of the future her spirit fill'd
 With a mighty rushing tide;
And an empty title alone remain'd
By the sacrifice of her young life gain'd !

* * * * *

The morning's tints were struggling o'er
 The gray and misty sky,
Ere ceas'd the wassail and uproar,
 And sounds of revelry :
And the sun look'd forth on a drunken throng
That had wearied the night with their noise and song,
 As they slowly homeward reel'd.
In Lord Arran's halls reign'd quiet
In the place of mirth and riot,
 And sleep each eye fast seal'd ;

And soothing dreams over Winfred fell
Of the early home she lov'd so well.

'Twas a glorious scene that the sunny rays
Lit up with their glowing light,
O'er purple heather their radiant blaze,
And on mountain top shone bright,
And the fair lake with its snowy vest
In the valley lay outspread,
Whilst many a swan with spotless crest
Skimm'd lightly over its quiet breast,
Uplifting his stately head;
And the willows wav'd with mournful air,
Their graceful shadows reflected there.

On the castle walls the flags still hung
Drowsily drooping down,
O'er the ivy wreaths which their tendrils flung
Its loftiest heights to crown ;
And the deer brows'd calmly in the park,

Uplifting their heads at times to hark,
Lest the hunter's horn on the air should break,
And a thousand echoes around them wake ;
But all was still—save the thrilling note
 Of a blackbird in a tree,
Which on the morning air did float
 With a music full and free,
And the old clock chiming forth the hour
With a warning voice from the castle tower !

The young cannot always feel dull and sad,
 Whatever their lots may be,
And when Winfred woke up, her face was glad
 As the happiest you'd see;
And with rapturous glance she gaz'd far out
On the mountain scenery round about
 On Glenivor's wide domain,
And a feeling of triumph fill'd each vein
As she thought of the vanish'd night
 When she reign'd as Beauty's Queen,

And they rais'd the wine cup brimming bright
And pledg'd it to her again and again,
As the fairest ever seen.

How her heart had swell'd in triumph then
There was none to know or tell,
Save by the flash of her dark eyes when
Lord Arran's gaze on her fell,
And a haughty air that seem'd to say
Who can compare with me this day?

For a few weeks she appear'd well pleas'd
With her stately castle home;
And Arran seem'd of his troubles eas'd,
For he could unshackled roam
O'er his wide domain, and with hound and horn
Pursue his sports thro' the wintry morn.
Little she saw of him
Till the eve with its shadows grim
Crept sternly o'er turret, wall, and tower,
And the owl came forth from his ivied bow'r,
And flapping his gray wings slow

Utter'd his notes of woe,
As prophetic of evil's coming hour;
Then tired and weary he'd turn his rein
With a slacken'd pace towards his home again.

There was little change in that country life—
No bustle, excitement, or stir, or strife,
And it wearied her heart ere long;
And a mournful shade o'er her features stole,
And a bitter feeling within her soul,
As tho' she were suffering wrong;
And she grew more silent ev'ry day,
And he, as if sullen, kept away.

Once and once only her anger broke
From its bounds of silence, and she spoke
Words which were best unsaid;
For they could not recal, with their blighting pow'r
Or bitter memories one vanish'd hour;
Or love that had long been dead.
And stern, and cold, and self-reliant,

He gave her back but looks defiant,

Or else a smile of scorn,

As he gravely, calmly, said—

“ The mind that could feel itself all forlorn

In a spot which Nature doth so adorn,

Must be poor and weak indeed :

And I envy not its morbid state,

Nor pity its feelings desolate,

Which are as some worthless weed

That, flaunting to the sun and air,

Smothers the better blossoms there,

And scatt'reth its own rank seed—

Which taketh all virtue from out the soil,

That yieldeth no harvest to labour's toil.

Strive Winfred, humbly strive,

For some better aim to live,

And from grief thy heart assoil—

From that idle grief which sows

For itself such endless woes,

Such vexings and turmoil.

Live for the future, and let the past,

With its fleeting dreams, be for ever cast
To the grave's unshaken quiet;
For neither now can change a fate
Repented of, alas, too late!
'Tis all in vain to try it.
But both may seek earth's ills to bear
With resignation's peaceful air,
And feed on wisdom's diet."

From that hour a cold reserve had sway
Over both their hearts, and day by day,
As a river bound by the Frost King's spell,
All feeling in Winfred's heart did lay—
'Twas a contrast strange and terrible
To the sunny glory, whose golden ray
In such showers of light once us'd to play
O'er her lovely face, and in triumph swell
Thro' her bounding heart—that heart which now
Lay as in Death's cold caverns low,
All motionless and still.

None that had known her in days gone by
Could have pass'd her now without a sigh—
She look'd so miserable !

* * * * *

On the lake's calm surface a little isle
From the castle might be seen;
Both summer and winter it seem'd to smile
With a verdure fresh and green.
And its waving pines rock'd to and fro,
And the waters with incessant flow
Beat 'gainst its mossy sides, and blent
With the breeze's sighing tone,
Which many a mournful murmur sent
Thro' the air with its music lone.
On that little isle was a nameless grave,
In a shelter'd nook it lay,
Where the stormy wind might never rave,
Or the scorching sunbeams play.
But the turf was finer and greener there,

And it grew more quick than it did elsewhere;
For the dewdrops on its peaceful breast
Would from morn to eve in brightness rest.
'Twas said that when moonlight's silvery flood
Cover'd the land with light,
That a spirit form by that lone grave stood,
As of a lady bright.
And that notes of music swell'd around,
Like to a harp's low fluty sound:
And that unseen hands would flowerets strew,
Of the rarest beauty and fragrance too,
Which withering at morn were found.

I know not if the tale be true,
Or an idle legend, for no one knew
The date of that quiet grave, nor who
'Neath its mossy cov'ring slept.
The lilies around it blew most fair,
And the violet's sweetest odours there
On the spring's light breezes swept.

And the wild swan lov'd that spot the best,
And did yearly choose it for her nest.

Not far away was a little bow'r

With a twisted oaken seat,

And round it straggled the wild rose flow'r

And the eglantine so sweet.

It faced to the south, and the summer's breath

Seem'd to linger kindly there,

When the neighb'ring mountains and purple heath

Their wint'ry garb did wear!

And even at Christmas the roses blew

'Midst the foliage dim and sere,

And their pallid leaves in triumph threw

In the lap of the dying year.

To this quiet spot from her stately home

Did Winfred come each day;

There, poring o'er memory's mournful tome,

The time pass'd slow away,

And a thousand strange wild fancies spread

Their deadly shadows in heart and head.
She would gaze on the water's placid breast,
Which like molten silver shone,
As though there was nought to disturb its rest
Or rattle its surface on:
And wonder if 'neath its quiet face,
On which the tempest could leave no trace,
There was peace for the calmly sleeping—
Those who, their wild woes weeping,
From this dull earth pass away,
Where Sorrow no more has sway:
And sometimes fancied she'd like to be
At rest 'neath its waves eternally.

Death is an awful thing
When it comes in life's early spring—
The bloom still on the flower:
But wait till disease and care
Have wither'd its blossoms fair
In a dark and evil hour—
Till the heart's bright dreams have died away,

And blight has dimmed its colours gay,

Then welcome is its wing!

As it sweeps thro' the gloom of night's starless skies

And pierces the soul with its spectral eyes,

We dream of that better world that lies

Afar—and feel no sting.

But the grave reveals what this life may not,

And not always betters the sleeper's lot.

'Twere well to remember this,

Ere our feet have cross'd the stream.

Which leadeth to woe or bliss,

Where none may e'er more redeem—

Where the tree as it fell, must lie for aye,

And no power may move its sins away.

'Tis an awful thought, but one whose hue,

Alas! is all too real and true,

And had Winfred felt it so,

The tempter had further from her stood,

And his evil precepts all withstood,

Had worked her soul no woe.

But, alas! his night-shade breath had stain'd
The little good that there remained.

* * * * *

The evening breeze was sighing
In a low and mournful tone,
Thro' a room which held the dying,
Life's journey well nigh done;
And whisp'ring voices told the tale
Of her who lay there wan and pale;
And eyes were wet with tears,
And sounds arose of sob and wail
And dread distracting fears.
That ev'ning ere the board was clear'd,
The Lady Winfred went
Forth from the castle—none appear'd
To fathom her intent,
Altho' her eye that day did shun
The gaze of ev'ry other'one,
And a strange wildness in her air
Made the domestics talk and stare.

The moon's broad rays were sweeping,
In floods of light around;
The waters, calmly sleeping,
By perfect rest seem'd crown'd.
When she gained the lake's green sides, and there
Knelt down as if in act of prayer,
A moment only—ere she sprung
Into the icy flood,
Which with relentless mood
Its dark waves round about her flung:
A cry of horror thrill'd the air,
An agonising sound,
Which with its accents of despair
Broke thro' the silence round.
And a youth leapt madly in the wave
As if resolute to die or save;
It was a fearful sight
There, in the spectral light
Of the wan moon, to see him struggling,
The waters round about him bubbling,

As with fierce grasp he sought to hold
That lovely form so pale and cold,
And lay it on the bank.
Once, even twice it sank,
Then rose again—hope well nigh past,
He bore it to the shore at last,
A fragile burden, pale and fair,
Yet dear to him beyond compare!

With tenderest care her dripping dress
Full cautiously he wrung,
And wiped the water from each tress
That round her pale face clung.
And with still eyes of hopeless love
Gaz'd in such rending grief,
As might the sternest bosom move
To proffer some relief.
Alas! no help was nigh, and he
Must seek the castle hall,
With his dread tale of misery,
Its inmates to appal,

And leave that star of beauty prest
Insensible to earth's cold breast!

They bore her from that silent place,
Back to her home once more;
Death's shadows resting on that face,
On which full many lines you'd trace
Of passion's mysteries o'er!
And stern and silent by their side,
Right through those castle halls so wide,
Walked her deliverer too.
Compress'd his lips of ashy hue,
And agonis'd his look,
As scarce a single breath he drew,
Nor once his dim eyes took
From the pale beauty lying there
In Death's last struggles more than fair.

He might not follow where they laid
Their fading burden down,
But all unchecked by sneer or frown,

He enter'd Arran's private room;
And there, with looks of stormy gloom,
Unto his noble master said
These words,—“ The wreck thyself hath made
Awaits thee from a wat'ry tomb;
Thou knowest best if vows of thine,
Once offer'd up before God's shrine,
Have been fulfilled or not.
If she who shar'd thy princely lot,
That star of beauty most divine,
Hath had no reason to repine;
If, with the tend'rest care, thou'st sought
To cheer her from each gloomy thought,
And make her heart's least wishes thine:
For all thy high nobility,
Lord Arran I'd not wish to be
What thou art now,—not all the gold
That gleams in mines of wealth untold,
Can take guilt's burden from the breast.
Go, gaze on that young fragile flower,

Blighted and wither'd in an hour,
Once loveliest and best;
And feel thyself the murderer,
That work'd such fearful ill to her."
He ceas'd, and silent turn'd away;
None saw him more that dreadful night,
But cold within each bosom lay
A sense of woe and blight.
And in Lord Arran's soul the spell
Of gloom and horror darkly fell.

For hours they watch'd with grief and dread
Beside that pallid form,
That lay in helplessness outspread—
A lily wither'd by the storm
Of circumstance, that blew too keen
Its little tender leaves between.
And like a martyr there,
His white lips murmuring in pray'r,
Poor Arran knelt, till day's broad light

Glar'd in upon that scene of blight:

And hope was almost gone.

And desolation fill'd his soul,

Through which the mad and deaf'ning roll

Of waves of self-reproach dash'd on !

At length one faint and flick'ring ray,

As of returning life,

Seem'd o'er her alter'd face to play,

As 'midst the tempest's strife

Sometimes a sunbeam struggles thro'

The gloomy clouds that meet the view ;

And with a wild unmeaning stare

Her op'ning eyes gaz'd ev'rywhere,

Until at last came consciousness

Lord Arran's breaking heart to bless.

And in faint accents, low and weak,

She turn'd to him, and thus did speak :—

“ I've little longer now to live:

Dim are my hopes of Heaven ;

Yet would I ask thee to forgive

As thou may'st be forgiven.
I feel that duty's sacred path
 My feet have seldom trod,
And that I've brav'd the bitt'rest wrath
 Of an offended God.
Whose was the hand that sav'd my life,
 Ordain'd by One on high,
That snatch'd me from the dreadful strife
 Of waters rushing by?
I cannot see him now to bless,
 As I would gladly do,
But cut him off one flowing tress:
 I send it him by you.
And Arran, soothe the aching pain
 My sister's heart must know,
When she hears we may not meet again—
 She ever lov'd me so!
And tell her that her Winfred died
 With a repentant heart,
And for her gentle presence sigh'd
 When call'd upon to part.

I would be buried quietly
In that green islet lone,
Where breezes whisper answ'ringly
Unto the water's moan.
No state or foolish pageantry,
Nor sculptor'd marble stone;
But leave the erring there to lie
Forgotten and alone!
Strange dreams throughout my soul have crept
This last long weary night;
It seem'd as in the grave I slept,
And the moon's spectral light
Disturb'd my slumbers suddenly,
And all about and near to me
Were spirit forms that, with calm eyes,
Seen'd gazing on me—then I saw
One far more beauteous in the skies,
With star clouds all encircled o'er,
And He spake in accents such as none
Before to me had ever done,

So merciful and kind.
E'en now throughout my mind
Those soft tones thrill : and love divine
And pard'ning mercy may be mine.
Or is it all a dream
Born of the fever that doth stream
This moment through my frame ?
Oh, Arran, pardon that thy name
In life's last hour is breath'd by one
Who never may the past atone :
Who by her own rash act undone,
Leaves but a mournful memory
In hearts where love once used to be !
A sense of blight and withering,
Their spirits evermore to sting."

As if exhausted, then she lay,
And her eyelids wan and weak
Above her eyes droop'd heavily ;
And the pale and sunken cheek

With a deadlier hue o'erspread,
Seem'd as if life not long might linger;
But, as if touch'd from foot to head,

By Death's dread withering finger,
She awaited but his stern command,
Or the beckon of his spectral hand,
To bid her hence to that dim shore

That borders on the better land;
Where, heedless of Life's breakers' roar,

The waiting spirit takes its stand,
Until the judgment hour makes plain,
If Death is loss or Death is gain!

Like a shadow fading from the grass
As you stand watching, seemed to pass

The life from out her frame:
No outer struggle marked the power
Of change within that blighted flower,
Nor dark o'ershadowing came
Of the moment when the spirit fled,
And the lamp of life was quench'd and dead.

The outer tenement was left,
Of its spirit occupant bereft—
 To the gazing eye more fair
Than when quick pulses stirr'd its rest,
And, on its loveliness imprest,
 The soul's mark lingered there.

'Twas a sad thought that one so bright
 So early should have fled;
No happy memories to light
 Her pathway to the dead;
But a sense of desolating gloom
For ever lingering round her tomb,
 And in the hearts of those
That she had left behind,
 Remorseful weeping o'er the woes
Of her impassion'd mind,
Which, like a torrent wild and strong,
Dash'd on its rapid course headlong.

The day before the burial,

Lord Arran sent to know
The young man's name
Who to him came
That night of hopeless woe.
In gloom had pass'd the interval,
But now within his soul
A calmer feeling stole,
And he look'd upon the past
With a reflective eye,
Which tho' by clouds o'ercast,
Had lost its brilliancy.
Still pierc'd beyond the gloom and dread
Which all around his path was spread,
Up to futurity—
Where what seems darkest here made plain
Shall break upon the sight again.

“ Old Donald's son of Invertross,
Who lives hard by at Castle Cross
It was that came that night,

And like some restless sprite
O'ershadow'd by a fearful spell,
Since the dread hour when ill befel
The Lady Winfred, he has been
A wand'rer by the banks so green
Of that dread lake;" so to their lord
The tenants answer'd, word for word.
When more he question'd, they replied,
" When first she came here as a bride
Upon that festal night,
He pledg'd her beauty bright,
And many a flatt'ring ditty sung;
And since has oft her praises rung:
In fact we all have guess'd
That an idle worship in his breast—
We will not name it love,
Tho' love it might be—reign'd above
All other feelings, and possess
His thoughts; for day by day
He'd watch her on her way,

With that deep air of interest
And silent anxious watchfulness,
Which words, weak words, at very best,
But poorly ever can express.
And oft at night we've seen him stand,
When darkness o'er the quiet land
Crept slowly, gazing with fix'd eyes
Upon that little isle which lies
Upon the lake's fair breast,
As tho' by some vague fear possess.
" 'Twas he that sav'd our lady bright
From the dread waves that fearful night,
And brought her home at last."
They ceased—the tears down trickling fast,
Arran made answer, " Take him this,
The guerdon for his watchfulness,
And say, the Countess ere she pass'd
Sent it with words of thankfulness,
And did her brave deliv'rer bless!"

* * * * *

The warm, glad sun shed o'er the land
 Its kind and genial glow,
And primrose flow'rs by soft winds fann'd
 Did their sweet, fresh odours throw
On the morning air, and the violet's breath,
Upborne from its perfum'd leaves beneath,
 With a fragrance rich and rare,
 Was scenting everywhere.
The moss banks shone with a deeper green,
 Where the brooklet with its murm'ring sound
Over the pebbles meandering,
 Shed a happy gurgling music round.
And a hum of thankfulness and mirth
Told of the young Spring's blessed birth,—
All hearts were blithe and gay,
 And the linnet's tones uprose,
Chaunting a merry roundelay,
 As grateful for Winter's close.
And hopeful for present hours which wore
A gladsome countenance once more.

No whit less gay than bird or bee,
That from each flow'r and from each tree
Rung out their strains triumphantly,
Was lovely Gwendoline,
Who with glad heart and cheerful air,
And merry eyes that might compare
With the sun's golden shine,
Was with sweet Ethel roaming there,
Each in their girlhood's prime;
Unfetter'd by the worldliness
That doth on many a spirit press
Its with'ring touch—with mask and mime—
And outward show of stateliness,
Seeking all Nature to repress.

Beside them, on a rural seat,
The reverend pastor sat,
With smile benevolent and sweet,
Listening their merry chat.
Whilst Desmond with admiring eye
Gaz'd on the glowing scene—

The fresh glad earth and sapphire sky,
And trees just sprouting green :
And thought that Paradise could ne'er
More beautiful have been.

Alas ! that sorrow's presence here
Should cloud each glowing scene ;
That all which brightest doth appear
Unto our mortal sight,
Beneath its outer garb doth wear
A withering and blight.
Little those maidens in their glee,
Their laughter and their song,
Thought of the darksome cloud to be
Within their hearts ere long.
That the sun which shone so brightly there,
With a kindly warmth on earth and air,
Fell with a mournful shade elsewhere—
Peep'd thro' a darken'd room
Where the beautiful now lay,
Shrouded in coffin'd gloom,
The spirit passed away :

And on the lifeless form imprest
The seal of everlasting rest!

And well it was that from their sight
Futurity was veil'd,
That no foreshadowing of night,
Joy's noonday sun had paled.

For had they thro' the mists enshrouding
The distant scenery peep'd,
A blighting shade those sunbeams clouding
Their souls in woe had steep'd ;
And the dreadful truth flashed through each heart,
Like to some keen empoisoned dart.

But now the skies were all undimm'd
Or chequer'd by a cloud,
And Gwendoline joy's sweet notes hymn'd,
Her laughter clear and loud
Re-echoing gladly through the air,
As she stood gaily list'ning there
To some quaint tale the pastor told
Of what he'd seen in days of old ;

That was a happy day—the last
Whose sunshine's golden ray
Should brightly fall, and all too fast
It sped upon its way;
And eve's sweet shadows at its close
Fell with unnatural repose.

For stern and grim woke up the morrow,
With tidings dread of death and sorrow,
O'erwhelming every brain;
And burning tears flow'd forth like rain
As tho' they ne'er might cease again,
And hearts were bow'd with care;
Their rose of beauty in its bloom
Was gather'd early for the tomb,
The blight spot falling there;
And desolation's dreadful gloom
Seem'd reigning ev'rywhere.
The heavens, with angry clouds o'erswept,
For every tear their eyelids wept,
Pour'd streams of water down;

And the thunder shook the earth around,
And the tempest with its fearful sound
And fierce relentless frown,
Seem'd as if heaven and earth combin'd
To freeze with terror every mind.

As in the stupor of despair
Poor Gwendoline was kneeling,
Her eyes uplifted as in pray'r,
And on her brow so pure and fair,
Where erst sat Resignation's air,
A deathly hue seem'd stealing.
Whilst the good Pastor by her side
Sought with kind words to stem the tide
Of sorrow wildly sweeping.
And not in vain, for Heav'nly love
Came from its throne of light above
To still the mourner's weeping.
And faith triumphant soar'd away
To lands unbreath'd on by decay!

“ God seeth not as we see here,

And that which to our sight
Harsh and unloving may appear
He deemeth to be right.

Depend upon it, Gwendoline,
He knoweth what is best,
So on His loving breast
As a true daughter calmly rest;
And dare not murmur or repine.
What are we that we should contend
One moment with His will?

When to our ears He still doth send
His loving words, “ Be still?”

It is but for a little while
Storms rend our spirits here,
Yet thro’ the clouds God’s loving smile
At seasons doth appear:

And to his children light at last
Will recompense Earth’s troubles past.
As one bereft of hope why sorrow?
The grave hath snatch’d away

Thy lov'd one, and eternal morrow
Dawn'd on her soul for aye.
Yet may we trust Death when he came,
And with his light'nings sear'd her frame,
Found all at peace within.
That vanity and sin,
By the cold waves of sorrow check'd,
Left the soul's garment all unspeck'd,
And that the garb of earthliness
Was chang'd for that of righteousness,
Which she did enter in.
Dense are the mists which shade our sight
But look beyond them to the light
That still undarken'd glows,
And 'midst Earth's storm-clouds and its pain,
Hope in deep trustfulness to gain
At last a sure repose—
Where, resting on thy Saviour's breast,
Naught shall disturb thy spirit's rest."
He ceased; and through her tears there shone
A ray of sunshine sweet

That cast an angel light upon
Her face, tho' all too fleet,
For as on an April day, its pow'r
Was soon obscur'd by sorrow's shower.
Which, with its crystal drops effac'd
The momentary light you trac'd.

'Tis a hard struggle to obtain
The mast'ry o'er our grief,
And one which we but seldom gain
Till Time has brought relief:
The worker of all cures, he brings
Sure healing on his changeful wings,
To wounds that once were sore—
Dries every tear now trickling fast,
Pours Lethean waters o'er the past,
Whose ills disturb no more,
And makes us feel God's hand in all
That doth on earth our lots befall!

* * * *

Within a simple grass-grown grave,
Round which the rustling birch-trees wave,
 Slumbers poor Winfred now—
No sculptor'd stone to mark the place,
Nor epitaph the eye can trace,
 Save the green mound below,
Which tells some weary heart's at rest,
Close folded to the earth's cold breast.
 A white rose grows that spot beside,
And, blossoming most fair,
Scents all the neighb'ring air,
Whilst gracefully its branches wave,
And pale blush leaves around the grave
 Are scattered far and wide.

At morn and eve, and noonday too,
 Young Donald sought that place,
And burning tears wash'd off the dew
 From earth's cool quiet face;
And words of love, the deep and true,

Came gushing forth apace,
With sighs that rent the heart anew,
And left their blighting trace.
No truer mourner ever wept
More hopelessly for one that slept,
Than he did by that grave—
Where slumber'd all he deem'd most bright,
The star that shed its guiding light,
Unconsciously above his way,
Set 'neath Eternity's chill wave,
Had ceased its kindly ray,
And his lone heart within the grave,
In agony now lay.
Yes, there the tempest winds might blow,
Or softer breezes play,
But from his soul no sunny glow
Might chase the gloom away:
All feeling there like winter's snow
Frozen by sorrow lay,
Save grief and hate—two burning words
That outliv'd all control,

Their fearful pow'r like two-edg'd swords
Piercing his inmost soul;
And even penetrating through
The cloak that custom round him drew.

For months in listless weariness
He pass'd his lonely days,
No thoughts to cheer, no friends to bless
His sorrow-stricken ways.
His aged father, wondering
What spell had loos'd grief's hidden spring,
Would often to him say,
Half joking, that he thought Love's wing
Had swept his youth away:
For that instead of joining in
The sports of young and gay,
In melancholy musings sped
His weary hours away;
And that he might as well be dead,
As living on that way.

No one would know him for the same,
That join'd in every village game
With so much zest of yore,
The bonniest lad that e'er was seen
To play at skittles on the green,
When labour's task was o'er;
Or follow at the bugle's sound
To where the huntsmen gather'd round.

At length he left his native home,
A wanderer thro' earth to roam,
With heavy heart of care;
Wearied by one o'erwhelming thought
That follow'd ev'rywhere,
As tho' with life's frail cords inwrought,
Love for the blighted fair!
She who so calmly slept the while
Upon the lake's green lonely isle.

He sought for death in every form,

Brav'd the wild ocean's bitt'rest storm,

Its surging waves in vain !

At last he found it where the brave

Bade Freedom's flag triumphant wave.

Above their thousands slain !

And where fresh hosts to conquest rush'd,

And blood in torrents freely gush'd

Upon the battle plain.

One found him there at eventide,

That he had known of yore ;

His glassy eyes were open wide,

But life extinct and o'er.

Around his neck, enclos'd with care,

A little packet tied,

That held the Lady Winfred's hair,

With his best heart's blood dy'd.

Upon the paper words were trac'd

By the red stains still uneffac'd,

And thus, alas ! they ran :—

“Take back this curl to that base man
On whom the murd’rer’s stain
Must evermore remain,
And bid him place it on the grave
Of her I perill’d life to save;
Then pray, if pray’r of use may be
To pardon win for such as he!”

P A R T III.



DARKNESS and light most strangely blend

 Their colours in life's sky;

O'er human hearts and hopes extend

 Their changeful panoply.

And though perhaps o'er many a lot

 Grief seems supreme to reign,

Be sure the sun's rays, bright and hot,

 Will struggle forth again.

Hope dieth not—like summer's smile

 That fades 'neath winter's breath,

Deaden'd by care she sleeps awhile,

 But not the sleep of death:

The first glad breeze of sunny spring

 Revives the frozen ground;

E'en so doth Hope her treasures fling

 In plenitude around.

And from the wastes by grief despoil'd
 She reareth many a flow'r,
Whose fadeless beauty unassoil'd
 Braveth the spoiler's power.
So tho' awhile o'er Gwendoline
The storm of sorrow roll'd,
 Clouding her spirit's glad sunshine
With shadows dark and cold.
Years pass'd, and youth's high heart outliv'd
 All memories of pain,
And like the trodden grass reviv'd
 To life and hope again.
As rain-drops on a summer day
 To cool the dry earth sent,
Traces of sorrow pass'd away,
And calmly on life's onward way,
 Loving and lov'd, she went.
And if a chasten'd light was seen
 Within her deep blue eye,
As tho' some blighting grief had been
 To cloud its radiancy,

Still it was sweeter far to sight,
 With its mild, gentle hue,
Resembling moonbeams mellow'd light
 Falling on ev'ning dew,
Than when no shade had ever stol'n
 Across the tranquil heaven,
Nor angry storm-clouds dark and swoll'n
 To mar its peace been given !

Within her quiet happy home,
 In calm content she dwelt,
No wish beyond its bounds to roam
 Her heart had ever felt.
And quickly sped the time away,
 And left but little trace,
Save that it added, day by day,
 Fresh beauty to her face,
And depth to feelings which did lie
Close hidden from the prying eye.

Thro' the long night of tears and sorrow

That knew no radiant break of morrow
Its darkness to dispel,
Desmond with tend'rest care had sought
To win her from each mournful thought,
By Friendship's holy spell.
Kind words, kind acts, and looks of love,
That could not fail her heart to move;
These every day united more
Two that were only friends before,
And fann'd affection's glowing flame
Until it lost its primal name,
And burnt with love's intenser power
In each young spirit's secret bower.

Then burst the sun with glowing rays
From out life's chequered sky,
And azure tints came peeping forth,
And dark clouds vanished from the north,
Till in one rich and golden blaze
Of glorious radiancy,

The whole earth seemed to lie;
The north and south, and east and west,
With purple tints of morn,
As in a kingly robe were drest,
And crimson streaks, like tints of love
Floating along the skies were borne,
Mantling with glory all above.

In one full tide of happiness,
O'erflowing in its glad excess,
Their spirits seem'd to swell;
Pow'rless all language to express,
 Love that no words can tell,
But which did all too deeply bless
 With its mysterious spell.
Heart unto heart their fragrance breath'd,
 Like flow'rs whose od'rous blooms,
In one sweet cluster brightly wreath'd,
 Lavish their rich perfumes;
Each seeking to outvie the other,
Yet sharing sweets with one another.

Thought unto thought, in harmony
The most delightful thrill'd ;
Each spirit's fountains seem'd to be
From the same torrent fill'd :
And pulse to pulse did gladly beat,
To Love's deep music, full and sweet.

The good old pastor shar'd the bliss
Their joyous spirits knew,
And sunn'd him in their happiness,
As innocent as true.
It seem'd as youth had come again
To cheer him with its ray,
And that old age from heart and brain
Had sudden flown away.
For tho' his life was on the wane
He did not feel decay !

The curly locks in silver showers
Fell thick above his brow,

Like hale old Winter crown'd with flowers
That brave the frost and snow,
So seem'd he in his evening hours,
Content with all below;
A long calm life of usefulness,
He had not led in vain,
For God's approving smile did bless
Even his hours of pain:
And that sweet peace shone round his way,
Which this world cannot take away.

* * * *

Two years had fled since to the tomb,
In life's first hours of sunny bloom
Poor Winfred pass'd away;
And Arran's halls were desolate,
As was their owner's mournful state
When first he heard of her sad fate,
That dark and dreadful day.
The grass grew green above her bed,

And the flow'rets blossom'd fair,
And at morn and eve their perfume shed,
Like incense on the air,
Tho' none had ever ventured
Their timid footsteps there !

Through many a distant land
Lord Arran sadly rov'd,
Far from the home he lov'd,
Driven forth by Fate's stern hand.
And with him went a nameless awe,
That clouded ev'ry scene he saw ;
A sense of misery lay outspread,
Like a fun'ral pall above his head,
It's gloomy aspect colouring
Each gorgeous and each sunny thing ;
So that where'er he went no ray
Of light might dawn upon his way ;
But dark o'ershadowings of dread
Forever seem around him spread !

The sternness from his brow was gone,
And a tremble in his alter'd tone
Told that deep grief still prey'd
Upon his spirit's broken rest,
And that a weight upon his breast
By care's rough hand was laid;
But what that secret load might be
To all remain'd a mystery !

They deem'd his was a moody mind
Exil'd alike from all his kind;
That some dark passion's secret sway
Had driven all joyousness away,
And that remorseful mem'ry's sting
Had chang'd him to that blighted thing;
But yet too much of mournfulness
Those pallid features did express,
To bid you think that crime alone
Had turn'd his feelings into stone,
And dried the source of all delight,
Leaving a dreary waste to sight.

There was a something in his air,
Despite its cloudy hues of care,
That still attracted ev'ry eye,
Altho' you gaz'd unconsciously.
And the kind heart felt sorrowful
To see those eyes so cold and dull,
That brow so wrapp'd in gloom,
Whilst still the signs of bloom
On ev'ry lineament you trac'd
By care's dark lines still uneffaced!

But from the hour that Donald died
Far o'er the waters deep and wide,
He felt within his heart as tho'
The cause of all the sin and woe
That with its fierce relentless tide
Swept both the hearts regretted so.
Almost a murderer—altho'
He had not struck the fatal blow
That laid or one or other low.

Perchance 'twas weakness thus to feel:
Whate'er it was, he could not steel
His heart against regret; alone,
Without one friend whose kindly tone
Might wake fresh hopes within his breast,
Or soothe him with his counsels blest,
He fed on his dark thoughts, and they
Grew gloomier each succeeding day,
Till brooding over sins ideal,
He turn'd despairing from the real
Plain duties that before him lay.

At length his weary steps retrac'd
The homeward path that bore
Him o'er the wide and wat'ry waste,
Back to his native shore;
And a fever'd longing which did burn
Incessant in his soul,
Made him for that sweet dwelling yearn,
Where first his heart was taught to learn
Love's magical control.

There he might ease his burden'd breast,
And all his guilt and woe confest,
Be shriv'd of sins that now opprest !

Straight to the pastor's house he went
On full and frank confession bent,

But, ere he gain'd the door,
Fair Gwendoline attracts his sight
There, in the morning's golden light,
E'en lovelier than before ;
And Desmond standing by her side
Gaz'd on her with fond love and pride,
Feelings he knew of yore.

A thrilling grief through Arran crept,
He could have turn'd away and wept,
Such bitterness his soul o'erswept,
As mem'ry's cup ran o'er ;
But his trembling steps the pathway kept
Right to the open door,
And warm the welcome he received
Upon its threshold floor,

As if a friend whose loss had grieved,
Return'd to life once more !

The weight of misery seem'd to fall
Like a dark veil from his heart,
And the doubts that did so long appal
As morning mists depart.
Their cheerful tones his being filled,
And every stormy feeling still'd,
As with sweet magic art.
The brand of Cain that until now
Rested in fire upon his brow,
Where'er on earth he roved,
Was suddenly removed ;
And their loving words of welcome brought
Vitality to every thought.

'Twas strange that one brief moment should
Banish a woe so long indulged,
Whose secret load still undivulged
Had even Time withstood ;

But Gwendoline's the first kind word
For years his aching soul had heard,
And thro' his heart its magic stirr'd
And filled his every sense,
Changing, with its sweet influence,
Darkness to light, and giving birth
To Hope, whose rays seem'd flown from earth.

Too well they read the mournful lines
Upon his forehead traced,
And back, far back, to other times,
Did wingèd memory haste,—
To vanish'd days, when one belov'd
First parted from them there,
Now by Death's finger far remov'd
Beyond this world of care;
And Arran's grief their pity mov'd,
As he stood silent there;
He, who so long o'er earth had rov'd,
Companion'd by Despair.

Time had chang'd all, for Gwendoline

Was now a happy wife,

Wedded to one whose hopes had been

Blighted in early life,

But who now bore upon his mien

No trace of sorrow's strife—

His lot all happy and serene,

With true contentment rife.

Upon her cheek the roses grew,

Altho' perhaps a tend'rer hue

Their fadeless beauty wore;

And to her eyes' deep cloudless heav'n

A more angelic light was given

Than e'er they knew before;

As tho' the soul shone clearly thro'

The glory of their sapphire hue,

And little of this earth remain'd

To mar their brilliancy unstain'd.

With grateful air Lord Arran took

The pastor's proffer'd hand;

His mild and venerable look,
And words, and aspect bland—
The deep, warm interest he took
In other's weal and woe,
Making their joys and sorrows his,
As tho' for him below
There was no happiness save this,
His Master's work to do,—
To laugh with those who laugh, and weep
With such as grief's dark vigil keep,
Made him belov'd by every one,
And deep respect and reverence won;
And Arran as he gaz'd on him
Felt his stern eyes with tears grow dim,
His soften'd spirit melt.
For Virtue's sacred image there,
Was stamp'd in its perfections rare,
And all its influence felt.
And when most kindly press'd to say
Beneath his friendly roof,
Till Care's dark lines had pass'd away

And happiness resum'd her sway,
And they had ample proof
That health might gild again life's day,
He felt he could not utter "nay,"
Or gloomy hold aloof,
So one in that blest circle he
Calmly resign'd himself to be.

Months pass'd away: the summer flowers
Made glad and gay the earth's fair bowers,
And a holy quiet crown'd the hours
That flew on swift wings by.
The golden grain grew ripe beneath
The gorgeous sun's meridian breath,
And south winds murm'ringly
Rippled the waters of the stream
That flow'd rejoicing 'neath its beam.
No shadow stole across the sky
Of purest sapphire clear and high,
Nor sound was heard, save notes of joy,
That swell'd each heart triumphantly—

In whose deep strains there seem'd to be

Pure happiness without alloy;

As calm, as holy now the life

That Arran led—no idle strife

Disturb'd its sweet repose.

And brilliantly above his way,

Hope's sunbeams with their golden ray

Adorn'd each evening's 'close.

Now first he learn'd what few below,

How rich soe'er in wisdom know,

That those are happiest who seek,

With spirits purified and meek,

To bear Life's evils, and to stem

The tide that dashes over them.

Tho' 'whelmed 'neath Trial's stormy sea,

To smile upon adversity.

A lovely picture that fair girl

Who by her father's side

Grew like some precious ocean pearl,

Seeking its wealth to hide

Deep in the oyster's silv'ry shell,
With none its priceless worth to tell.
In works of love her time was spent—
Not in the world's false merriment;
Her earnest wish to do what good
In this poor passing life she could—
To soothe the sorrows of the poor
And learn from them how to endure.
For little dream the rich and great
Of all the miseries that wait
Upon the poor man's suffering state—
The scanty pittance scarce enough
To find him food, tho' coarse and rough;
In hours of sickness not a friend
Beside his dreary couch to tend—
To press his hand, and whisper low
Sweet words of comfort for his woe.

None watch'd her with more interest
Walk on her heav'nly road,

Or greater sympathy exprest
Than Arran daily show'd.
To him, in her deep quiet faith,
She seem'd an angel form,
Too fragile for this world's rude breath
And bitter biting storm.
A flow'r of grace and beauty given
To charm the eye awhile,
Ere passing to its native Heaven
Beneath God's loving smile.
And daily, hourly, she grew
More cherish'd in his sight,
Till Love's dead flame burst forth anew
And burnt with ardour bright,
Whilst all around beneath its hue
Seem'd cloth'd in sheets of light.
With answ'ring tenderness her eyes
Responded to his gaze,
And in their depths Love's cloudless skies
Shone forth undimm'd by haze;

And with sweet gentle words she sought
To cheer him on his way,
To soothe him from each gloomy thought
Which once alone had sway,
To raise his soul to that blest sphere
Where all her hopes were given;
Teaching, tho' joy is passing here,
Its deathless home is Heaven ;
And the mind that doth in meekness bear
The shafts of woe and pain,
Borne upwards on the wings of prayer
Liveth in light again,
Beatified before the Throne
Of the thrice blest Eternal One !

* * * *

Slowly the shades of evening crept
Across the pastor's sky,
And the fire that had for long months slept
Within his alter'd eye,
Burst forth as suddenly again,

As you might see 'midst heavy rain
The flames mount to the sky,
Tho' check'd by elements conflicting,
Yet still thro' all in might existing,
And which, when dying, to the last
A fearful splendour round them cast.
So did the film of age and pain
Strive to conceal, yet all in vain,
The soul's ethereal spark,
Which burn'd the brighter as the ray
Of coming night obscur'd Life's day,
Soon to be dim and dark:
It seem'd as tho' on wings of fire
'Twas mounting upwards—higher, higher,
Until at last from earth's wide shoal
It should attain its destin'd goal.

They watch'd him fading calm away—
The tints of change still, day by day,
Deepening in their dread hue;

Till the hollow and the sunken cheek,
And the accents tremulous and weak
 Proclaimed what Time could do.
Yet as the outer garb decay'd,
And pain its fearful havoc made,
 The mind within grew stronger;
And his words as a sweeping breeze's sound
Thrilled through the hearts of all around
 With cadence deeper, longer;
And a holier light upon his brow
Seem'd from immortal fires to glow.

His bed of sickness knew no pang,
Death's clarion notes full gladly rang
 Upon his list'ning ears;
For as a conqueror returning
From fields of fame he has been earning,
 In triumph's garb appears,
So, from Life's battle-field he came
All undefil'd, with spotless name,

Calmly, yet joyfully, to wait,
Till Death should ope Life's golden gate,
And evermore upon his sight
Immortal suns shine clear and bright.

Dearer than ever to his heart
Were the lov'd forms he soon must leave;
And oft he pray'd them not to grieve,
Tho' from their presence he must part;
But with meek spirits still to bear
The weight of earthly woe and care:
Then calling Ethel to his side—
Who sought in vain her tears to hide—
Whisper'd her soft and low;
Then folded Arran to his breast,
Saying, before he sank to rest
It was his wish to see his child,
So dutiful, and good, and mild,
Not lonely in her woe—
And that ere called from life away
He would the nuptial blessing say.

It was a solemn hour, but clear
The dying pastor read
The marriage service—all could hear
Who knelt beside his bed
That in his breast was firmest faith
That those now join'd for life till death
Would never separate grow;
But faithful both in joy and woe
Lead one another on the road
He not in vain to either show'd.
No painful mem'ry from the past
Came with its upas breath to cast
A shadow o'er their way:
But an aw'd and sacred feeling stole
With mystic influence in each soul,
Which pray'ful soar'd away
To that blest land where death nor pain
Shall sever kindred hearts again.

As wearied for a little while

He closed his agèd eyes,

M 2

Still play'd upon his mouth a smile
Like Summer's when it dies—
A gleam unnaturally bright
Ere lost for ever to the sight;
And on his brow was deep repose,
Such as a little infant knows
When, cradled on its mother's breast,
It sobs itself to perfect rest.

Breathless they gaz'd as still he slept,
The day's last hues were flying,
And moonlight shadows slowly crept
Over the lov'd and dying.
With a mournful and a silv'ry ray
They chas'd the twilight tints away,
With their mystical sepulchral light
Bidding a welcome to the night—
That night upon whose sable wing
The pastor's soul should soar,
Where pain, and blight, and withering,
Bid farewell evermore.

Within the hush'd and darken'd room
Did wingèd angels sweep;
Their presence sanctified its gloom,
Watching his last pale sleep:
Waiting to bear his soul away
Up to the realms of fadeless day.
As if he felt their presence, came
A strange light tremor thro' his frame,
And his op'ning eyes gaz'd anxiously,
As tho' they saw, or sought to see,
Some form belov'd, which was not there;
Then turning to his daughter fair,
He press'd her hand in his, and sought
To give a shape to voiceless thought.
But vain the effort, for the soul
Disdain'd the body's weak control,
And upward soar'd, afar—away—
Ere he one parting word could say.

There, like a lovely marble, lay,
Deaf to all woe, the lifeless clay:

A look of such repose it wore
As ne'er the eye had seen before;
And tears tho' trickling down apace
Could wake no pity on that face—
Too beautifully still and fair,
For ought of life to linger there.

'Twas hardly sorrow for the dead
That bow'd poor Ethel's fragile head,
For well she knew that life for him,
Compar'd with Heav'n's delicious rest,
Was but a valley dark and dim:
That he had won those mansions blest
Where living fountains ceaseless flow,
And that no thought of other's woe
Should ever more disturb his breast.

And not without a comforter
Her aching heart was left:
For tho' of that deep love bereft

Which from her childhood was to her
Light, sunshine, all that o'er her way
Illumin'd the darkness of life's day;
Yet he to whom that solemn night
Of sad bereavement she did plight,
'Midst tears her hand remain'd to bless
Her path with pure deep happiness.
And not for worlds would she recal

From his glad home on high—
That home in which no blight may fall,

No tears bedew the eye—
The lov'd bright spirit back to warm

Once more that cold and lifeless form.
No! as she knelt in silence there
She only breath'd an earnest pray'r
That her last end, like his, might be

Of calmest joy and purity—
And that ere long their souls might meet
In bliss before the mercy-seat.

* * * *

Once more within Glenivör's walls
Lord Arran's stately footstep falls,
And by him stands another Bride,
Less beautiful than she that died;
But with a gentle kindly air
She greeteth all assembled there—

Her voice's silver tone
Awaking pleasant thoughts in those
Who listen to its sweet repose,
Like notes of music gone,
Which echo yet within the heart
As loth from memory to part.

Where'er her footsteps fall, sweet Peace
Sheds her benignant rays,
And strife and suffering seem to cease,
And sounds of love and praise
Break forth, as tho' the harmony
Of her own soul could fling
Over the darkest thing
The music of its purity.

And Arran is far happier now
Than e'er he seem'd to be of yore,
Altho' he wears upon his brow
A deeper shadow than before:
It is not that his soul is dim
With mem'ries of the past
So fraught with misery to him:
No! calm has come at last,
And that dear being by his side—
His friend, companion, and his pride—
Soothes ev'ry care and pain;
But years of dull remorse have shed,
Within his heart and brain,
Their weary weight, and youth that's fled
May never come again!

All love him better than before,
With love the growth of years;
The sun's warm rays, the tempest's roar,
With smiles of joy and tears,
Alternate fall upon life's shore,

But still no gloomy clouds have sway
To darken o'er their happy way.
Their children, nurtured up with care,
Are unto sight as flow'rets fair,
Gifted with ev'ry gentle grace
That beams in their sweet mother's face;
Her mind's perfections yet more rare,
Grafted within each youthful soul,
Rear'd beneath wisdom's sage control,
And dearer every day they grow
 To Ethel's loving breast;
And spotless as the unveined snow
 That glitters on the mountains' crest,
Their happy spirits sparkling flow.
 Whilst pure religion, virgin blest,
 Dwells in their home as constant guest!

How chang'd, how different is all
 To what it once was there;
No gloomy clouds, as with a pall,
 Obscure the sunny air.

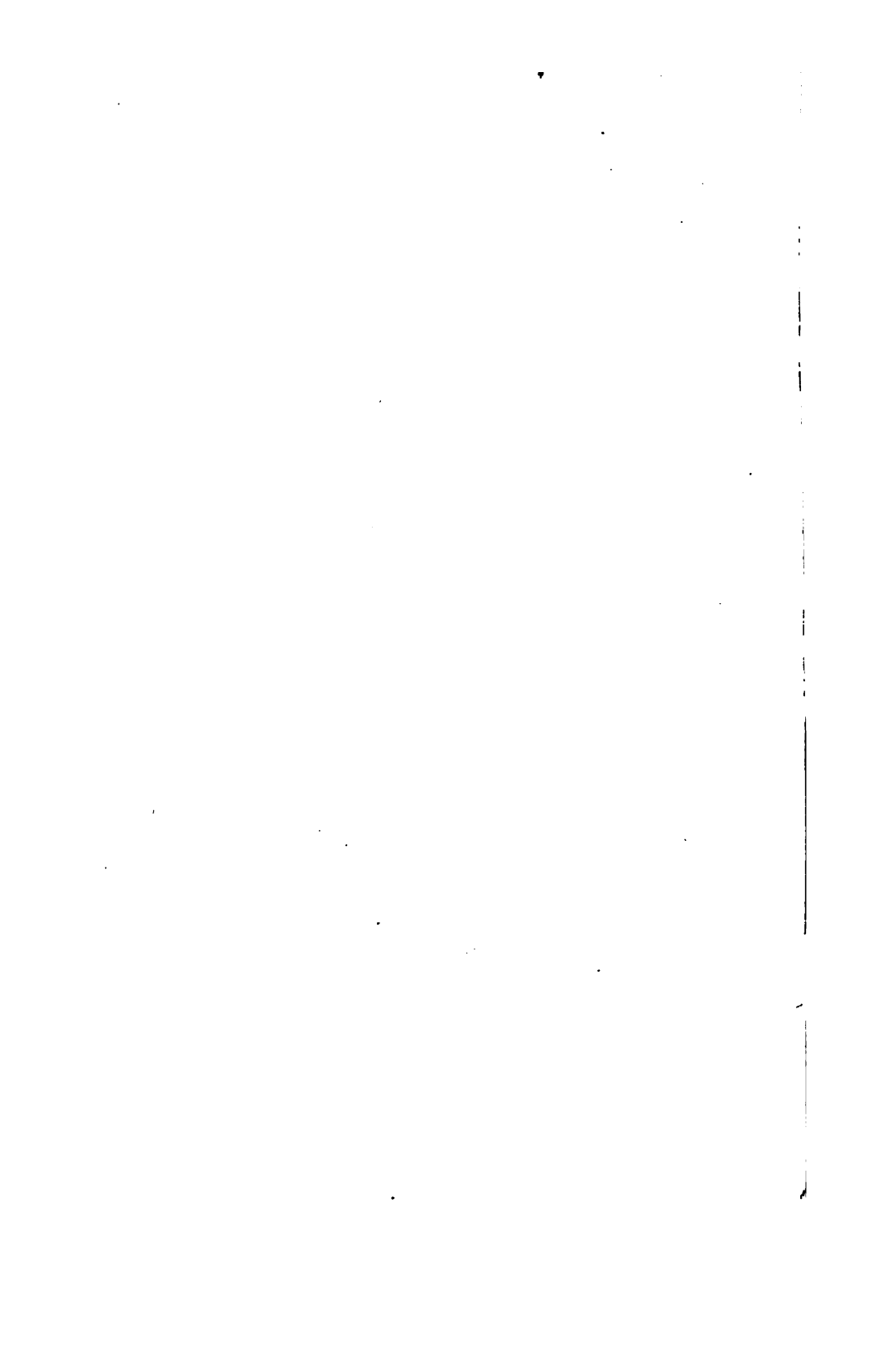
But Faith with beaming eyes looks up
To fairer realms on high,
Where those who quaff life's changeful cup
Meekly and patiently
Shall reap the bright rewards that wait
The perfect in a better state.

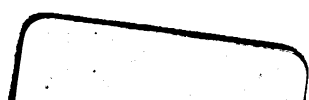
My tale is done, my song is sung,
And from my hand the bright harp flung,
With broken strings, for many a day
In aching solitude to lay;
Until arous'd by magic spell
Once more some tale of love to tell;
Or else, with sorrow's notes profound
To wake the silent echoes round.
If I have swept the chords in vain—
Poetic fancies in my brain,
Wak'ning within my heart alone
An answ'ring and a kindred tone—

For me the sorrow, me the pang,
The withering of hopes that sprang
Most gladly in my soul.
As waters in a bright stream roll
Unnotic'd onwards to the sea,
So will all thoughts, my book, of thee
Be swept from memory's cave:
Consign'd in silence to the grave,
Where even the best belovèd sleep,
With none oblivion's power to weep.
But if, as I would fain believe,
My strain within some hearts will leave
A pleasant memory of me,
Then, gratitude my harp to thee
Will wake within my soul anew
Thoughts of a deeper, holier hue,
And far profounder strains be mine
Than e'er I've breath'd at thy dear shrine,
Most heavenly Poesy!
Altho' before its altars I

Have bow'd in wild idolatry,
I dare not hope—I will not fear—
Go forth, and brave the Critic's sneer!
On the wild sea I trust my bark,
Tho' waves run high and clouds be dark,
Some pilot hand may guide it where,
Tho' angry tempests rend the air,
Secure from ev'ry raging blast
It shall be safely moor'd at last,
And shelt'ring in some safe retreat
The malice of the world defeat!

FINIS.





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